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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [REL](#) [PE](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: THE ALBA HOUSE THREAT

REF: A. LIMA 2000
[1](#)B. LIMA 2490
[1](#)C. LIMA 489
[1](#)D. LIMA 390
[1](#)E. LIMA 389

Classified By: POL/C ALEXIS LUDWIG FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The primary purpose of the so-called "ALBA houses" established within Peru during the last year is to spread Bolivarian propaganda via programs like the Venezuelan "Miracle Mission" that provides eye surgeries to poor Peruvians. The most sober reports suggest there are between nine and fourteen houses, mostly in southern Peru, that are little more than offices where patients go to coordinate their trips to the Venezuelan-Cuban eye center in Copacabana, Bolivia. Although the Venezuelan government has openly supported the ALBA houses with the Miracle Mission, it is not yet clear that Caracas has actually funded the houses themselves. The government's primary concern is that the ALBA houses have a hidden agenda beyond social work to undermine the Alan Garcia administration by promoting violence and a Venezuelan-style Bolivarian revolution. End Summary.

ALBA House Mission: Propaganda Via Social Work

[1](#)2. (C) According to various Embassy and media sources, the primary mission of the so-called "ALBA houses" established in Peru within the last year is to coordinate the Venezuelan "Miracle Mission" that provides eye surgery to poor Peruvians. According to ALBA's Peruvian website (www.alba-peru.net), Cuban and Venezuelan-sponsored medical teams have tested nearly 43,000 people during several trips to Peru since late 2006, and sent nearly 15,000 for surgery at a medical center in Copacabana, Bolivia. Additionally, dozens from northern Peru have been sent directly to Venezuela for surgery. (Note: The caravans of Peruvians heading south for eye treatment can be good business; one border town mayor told poloff he hoped to pave a key access road in order to encourage returning patients to visit his town. End Note.) The ALBA houses have also started coordinating the Cuban "Yo Si Puedo" (Yes I Can) literacy program, according to a media report. The director of Peru's ALBA houses Marcial Maydana has publicly admitted that these programs include pro-Venezuelan ideological content and reportedly said he hopes to build "an axis of Bolivarianism" in Peru. (REF A) Another ALBA Peru leader described the

houses as part of the international bloc that promotes Hugo Chavez.

Counting the ALBA Houses

13. (C) The most sober media reports say there are between nine and fourteen ALBA houses in Peru, mostly located in the south. (Note: Some less reliable newspapers have alleged a network of hundreds. One source told poloff that some people put an ALBA sign on their door hoping to attract Venezuelan aid. End Note.) Most of these houses are reportedly registered as "civil associations" with the GOP, although they were not established in coordination with GOP officials like a normal government-to-government aid program. In addition to the ALBA houses, a prominent Peruvian magazine reports the existence of 24 Venezuelan and 66 Cuban friendship houses. Although we have little specific information to explain how these friendship houses differ from ALBA houses, if at all, we speculate they are primarily propaganda centers.

Touring an ALBA House

14. (C) Poloff in June 2007 toured the original ALBA house in the southern region Puno: the house was essentially an office located in a decaying building near the center of town. The house lacked basic furnishings but was decorated with photos of Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro. (REF B) Embassy contacts in Cusco, including one whose cousin received eye surgery in Bolivia, similarly described the main ALBA house in Cusco as little more than a room where the Miracle Mission coordinates with potential patients.

The Venezuelan Connection

15. (C) Venezuelan organization and financing for the miracle mission is open knowledge, and ALBA Peru leaders have publicly expressed their affinity for Hugo Chavez; but to date we have only sketchy evidence showing direct Venezuelan support for the houses. ALBA Peru President Maydana has said publicly that he attended the Fifth ALBA Summit in Venezuela in April 2007, one month before he inaugurated the first ALBA house. At the inauguration -- which was attended by key Venezuelan diplomat Virly Torres -- Maydana reportedly promised to build roads and provide financing to small businesses, prompting one ALBA leader to speculate publicly that Maydana must have funding from somewhere. (Note: These promises have not materialized. End Note.) Other evidence includes a check recently discovered in an ALBA house and connected by Peruvian intelligence to the Venezuelan Embassy in Bolivia, according to a press report.

16. (C) Meanwhile, Venezuela's Ambassador has repeatedly asserted that the Venezuelan friendship houses -- he rejects the use of the term "ALBA" in their connection -- have been established spontaneously by Peruvian sympathizers of the Bolivarian ideal, but receive no financial support from Caracas. One Embassy congressional contact that knows Venezuelan diplomat Torres told poloff that Torres is less interested in ALBA than in promoting the Bolivarian Continental Coordinator (CCB), a network of radical leftist groups throughout Latin America reportedly organized by the FARC and the GOV. (REFS C & D. Note: Membership in ALBA and the CCB probably overlaps. End Note.)

ALBA Houses Hidden Agenda: Military Training? Bolivarian Revolution?

17. (C) The GOP's main worry is that the ALBA houses have a hidden agenda to undermine President Alan Garcia's government and promote a Venezuelan-style Bolivarian revolution. Congressman Rolando Sousa, head of a preliminary congressional investigation of Venezuelan influence, told poloff that he has evidence that at least two ALBA houses--in Junin and Huancayo--have provided paramilitary training to Peruvians. (REF C) The government has also blamed ALBA houses for stirring up anti-government protests; indeed, at least two individuals openly associated with the Cusco ALBA house

helped organize protests in February (REF E). The GOP has made similar allegations against the Venezuelan and Cuban friendship houses: Vice President Luis Giampietri accused one of giving paramilitary training, and Peruvian intelligence reports leaked to the media claimed another is used to coordinate violent actions during protests. (Note: We have not yet seen evidence backing these claims. End Note.)

Comment: ALBA Houses Only One Pillar of Venezuelan Interference

18. (C) Venezuelan involvement in the ALBA houses via sponsorship of the Miracle Mission is clear, regardless of the level of direct financial support to the houses. Primarily a social work and propaganda effort, however, the ALBA houses are probably not the greatest challenge Garcia faces from Venezuela. Of greater potential concern are Venezuelan Diplomat Virly Torres's outreach to social movements and efforts to organize the left, as well as the CCB and its alleged links to terrorist groups. (Although all these efforts probably overlap.) In response to concern about Venezuela, Peru's Congress in March formed a commission to investigate subversive activity that will reportedly have the power to subpoena financial records and compel witnesses to testify. (REF C) The results of this investigation should help clarify the extent of Venezuelan subversive activities via the ALBA houses or through other means. End Comment.
MCKINLEY